

What is claimed is:

1           1. A communications intermediating method for mediating  
2   communications user terminals carry out sharing virtual  
3   spaces on a network, the communications intermediating  
4   method:

5           furnishing network resource symbols to the user  
6   terminals;

7           setting up in advance a correspondence table in which  
8   identifiers for the virtual spaces and identifiers for the  
9   symbols are correlated;

10          providing an intermediating terminal enabling  
11   communication with the user terminals, and based on the  
12   correspondence table enabling conversion between the symbol  
13   identifiers and the virtual-space identifiers;

14          sending the symbol identifiers from the user terminals  
15   to the intermediating terminal; and

16          reporting from the intermediating terminal to the user  
17   terminals the virtual-space identifiers that correspond to  
18   the symbols; wherein

19          based on the reported virtual-space identifiers the  
20   user terminals participate in the virtual spaces and  
21   initiate communication with other user terminals having the  
22   same symbols.

1           2. An intermediating device for mediating  
2   communications among user terminals on a network, the  
3   intermediating device including:  
4           a correspondence table correlatively storing  
5   identifiers for virtual spaces, where the user terminals  
6   participate mutually to communicate, with identifiers for  
7   network resource symbols;  
8           a first reception means for receiving the symbol  
9   identifiers from the user terminals; and  
10          a first transmission means for transmitting to the user  
11   terminals the virtual-space identifiers that based on said  
12   correspondence table correspond to the received symbol  
13   identifiers.

1           3. The intermediating device set forth in claim 2,  
2   wherein:  
3           said correspondence table correlatively stores the  
4   virtual-space identifiers, the symbol identifiers, and  
5   levels of interest in the symbols;  
6           said first reception means receives from the user  
7   terminals the symbol identifiers and the interest levels;  
8   and  
9           said first transmission means transmits to the user  
10   terminals the virtual-space identifiers that based on said  
11   correspondence table correspond to the received symbol

12 identifiers and to the received interest levels in  
13 combination.

1 4. The intermediating device set forth in claim 3,  
2 wherein:

3 said correspondence table correlatively stores the  
4 virtual-space identifiers, the symbol identifiers, and level  
5 of similarity in user preference for the symbols;

6 said first reception means receives from the user  
7 terminals the symbol identifiers and predetermined  
8 preference data indicating the level of similarity in  
9 preference;

10 said first transmission means computes level of  
11 similarity in preference based on the preference data and  
12 transmits to the user terminals the virtual-space  
13 identifiers that based on said correspondence table  
14 correspond to the received symbol identifiers and to the  
15 received level of similarity in preference in combination.

1 5. The intermediating device set forth in claim 4,  
2 wherein the predetermined preference data includes  
3 positional information on the symbols displayed on user  
4 terminals.

1 6. A computer-readable recording medium on which is  
2 recorded a communications program for use by user terminals  
3 on a network, the computer-readable recording medium  
4 characterized by including:

5 a step of acquiring via a network, and selectably  
6 displaying, network resource symbols;  
7 a step of transmitting to an intermediating device  
8 identifiers for user-selected network resource symbols;  
9 a step of receiving identifiers for virtual spaces that  
10 correspond to identifiers for network resource symbols  
11 transmitted based on a correspondence table in the  
12 intermediating device correlatively storing in advance  
13 network resource symbols with virtual spaces; and  
14 a step of connecting to a given virtual space based on  
15 identifiers in received virtual spaces, and initiating chat.

1 7. A merchandise information exchange support method  
2 characterized by:

3 preparing a correspondence table in which merchandise  
4 and virtual chat spaces for exchanging information on the  
5 merchandise are correlated in advance;

6 presenting to user terminals via a network symbols  
7 prepared per merchandise item in order to display the  
8 merchandise identifiably;

9 identifying merchandise symbols selected in user  
10 terminals;

11 acquiring and reporting to the user terminals  
12 information for identifying virtual chat spaces correlated  
13 based on the correspondence table to given merchandise; and

14 enabling in a one user terminal exchange of information  
15 on the given merchandise with other user terminals to begin.

1 8. A communications intermediating method for mediating  
2 communications user among terminals on a network, the  
3 communications intermediating method:

4 correlatively storing identifiers for virtual spaces,  
5 where the user terminals participate mutually to  
6 communicate, with identifiers for network resource symbols;

7 receiving the symbol identifiers from the user  
8 terminals; and

9 transmitting to the user terminals the virtual-space  
10 identifiers that based on the stored data correspond to the  
11 received symbol identifiers.

1 9. A computer-readable recording medium on which is  
2 recorded a communications intermediating program for  
3 mediating communications among user terminals on a network,  
4 the computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded  
5 a communications intermediating program for executing:

6 a step of selectably displaying on user terminals  
7 network resource symbols;

8 a step of receiving identifiers for network resources  
9 selected in response to operations on the user terminals;

10 a step of acquiring identifiers for virtual spaces  
11 correlated to received network resource symbol identifiers  
12 based on a correspondence table made by correlatively

13 storing in advance identifiers for network resource symbols  
14 with identifiers for virtual spaces; and  
15 a step of transmitting the acquired virtual-space  
16 identifiers to the user terminals.

1 10. A communications method for use by a user terminal  
2 on a network, the communications method comprising:  
3 acquiring network resource symbols;  
4 transmitting identifiers for the symbols to a  
5 predetermined information terminal enabling conversion  
6 between identifiers for the virtual spaces and identifiers  
7 for the symbols, wherein communication with other user  
8 terminals is carried out;  
9 receiving from the information terminal virtual-space  
10 identifiers corresponding to the symbols;  
11 participating, based on the virtual-space identifiers,  
12 in the virtual spaces and initiating communication with  
13 other user terminals having the same symbols.

1 11. A communications device for communicating on a  
2 network, the communications device comprising:  
3 acquisition means for acquiring network resource  
4 symbols;  
5 communication means for participating in virtual spaces  
6 on the network to carry out communications with other  
7 communications devices;

8 a second transmission means for transmitting  
9 identifiers for the symbols to a predetermined information  
10 terminal enabling conversion between identifiers for the  
11 virtual spaces and the symbol identifiers;

12 a second reception means for receiving from the  
13 information terminal the virtual-space identifiers that  
14 correspond to the symbols; and

15 connection means for initiating, based on the virtual-  
16 space identifiers, communication with other communications  
17 devices having the same symbols.

1 12. The communications device of claim 11, further  
2 comprising a preference table in which symbols acquired by  
3 the communications device of claim 11 and level of interest  
4 in the symbols are correlatively stored; wherein

5 said second transmission means transmits to the  
6 predetermined information terminal the identifiers for the  
7 symbols and the level of interest.

1 13. The communications device of claim 11, further  
2 having a preference table in which symbols acquired by the  
3 communication device of claim 11 and predetermined  
4 preference data indicating level of similarity in user  
5 preference for the symbols are correlatively stored; wherein

6 said second transmission means transmits to the  
7 predetermined information terminal the symbol identifiers  
8 and the preference data.

1 14. The communications device as set forth in claim 12,  
2 wherein the predetermined preference data includes  
3 positional information on the symbols displayed on  
4 communications devices.

1 15. A merchandise presentation method cooperating with  
2 a chat system to enable exchange of messages mutually among  
3 multiple user terminals sharing virtual spaces structured on  
4 a network, merchandise presentation method comprising:

5 selectably presenting to a user terminal a symbol  
6 prepared for each merchandise to identifiably display the  
7 merchandise via a network;

8 obtaining and sending to a user terminal an identifier  
9 of a virtual chat space which is made to correlate to an  
10 identifier of a symbol and then stored when receiving an  
11 identifier of a symbol reported according to user selection;  
12 and

13 connecting the user terminal to the virtual chat space  
14 to start to exchange messages with other user terminals.

1 16. A communications support method, characterized by:  
2 preparing for each merchandise a chat space virtually  
3 installed on a network which invites users interested in  
4 relevant merchandise and a correspondence table where  
5 merchandise and a chat space corresponding said merchandise  
6 are correlatively stored;



7           selectably presenting to a user terminal a symbol  
8   prepared for each merchandise to identifiably display said  
9   merchandise via a network;  
10          identifying a symbol of merchandise selected by a user  
11   terminal; and  
12          obtaining information for identifying a virtual chat  
13   space correlated to relevant merchandise according to said  
14   correspondence table to issue command for inviting relevant  
15   user terminal to relevant virtual chat space and starting  
16   communication between users having interest in common  
17   merchandise.